# OUTLINE

Chap. 1

* King dying, on his deathbed (in his bedroom), reflecting on life, previous witch wars, the treaty, the death of his pregnant wife, how proud he is of his only son and heir and the lasting peace, and how his son has a bunch of kids etc.
* Introduce witch healer (great relationship with King)
* Introduce uneasiness between crown prince and witch healer
* Embraces death, unafraid. Did his best. Worked hard.
* Should feel like the passing of a legendary character, a warrior, an era has ended.
* Healer has done her best, but the reason she can’t do more to help him is because he’s human. Witch healing works best on witches. More of a numbing than a healing, she can’t prolong a non-witch’s life.
* Witch does something kind for one of the old king’s children who are outside the king’s bedroom. Something nice, the kids really like her.

Chap. 2

* New king is crowned. During the celebration after the cororonation, priest reads speech. Speech talks about old king’s legacy
* Younger people are ok with peace with the witches, but the older generation, the people who lived through the war and lost loved ones, were often frustrated with the king’s insistence on peace. They’re hoping the new king will be different, tougher. Humans first mentality.
* develop the children as characters
* Healer is missing
* New king gets up to give his speech. He hasn’t been drinking like everyone else. His speech is a slow build, insinuating what he means, eventually getting to the point that he believes the king was assassinated by a witch spy, which would mean the end of the treaty. He asks the priest to take his children, except for the eldest son, out of the room.
* He snaps his fingers, and from the ceiling above, in the rafters, drops the body of the healer. She has a noose around her neck. Her neck breaks, and her body swings and twitches behind him as he declares that the treaty is over.
* He puts a bounty on any witch in the kingdom. Wants everyone onboard now, sense of urgency. Go, find your neighbourhood witches, and bring them to me. Bounty is high for the first day, by sundown, and then is lower from then on. But significantly lower.
* New King has already spoken to his general, tells him to pick his best 6 best captains to lead missions to eradicate the 6 witch villages around the forest. Tells him to kill every witch they find. The kill squads start doing their thing at the same time the King makes his announcement.
* New King never actually believed that the healer killed his father, but he needs an excuse to break the treaty. He believes the majority of witches are evil, he would never know if they were raising an army. Believes that a war is inevitable with them, they were blindsided the first time. His father was wrong to let them expand their territory and their population, it makes them too powerful. It’s better for the kingdom in general if there weren’t witches there. They’re like insects, with a queen. Just because one insect didn’t bite you doesn’t mean you wont exterminate the nest.

Chap. 3

* Soldiers’ perspective, destroying villages. They sneak in. villages have about 50-60 witches, 20ish soldiers. Douse every thatched-roof house with gasoline, a LOT of gasoline is used, and then they light it on fire. It’s the most effective way to cause panic and kill a bunch of people.
* There will be holes in the fire, so soldiers have to surround the camp and kill any escaping witches
* Bow&arrows are probably effective. Shot from ground if trees unavailable. They can shoot escaping witches, or the main crowd. Lots of death, lots of screaming. No escapes. They do a really good job.
* “no one noticed the little girl hiding..s.s.ssbalhblahblah”
* As soon as witches start dying, Queen witch is alerted. She can sense when the witches are being attacked/killed, but she doesn’t know it in numbers. She can send out magical messages to all non-exiled witches, but the attacks are all happening at the same time.
* Captains of death squads have hour-glasses by the king, and at the hourglass emptying, that’s when the fires are supposed to be lit
* EXCEPT in one village, the one furthest from the capital, where soldiers were delayed by twenty minutes due to some flooding/getting lost, whatever. Travelling by horse. Captain will see that hourglass is empty, they’re behind, he comments on how the other fires are already being lit and in the distance they can see the lights (burning villages are pretty bright in the dead of night)
* They get to the village, set the gasoline quickly, and then light it. The fire is in a wide arc, with one hole at the base where the soldiers are waiting. The captain says something like “Take no pity, not even on the children.” Once the fire is lit, they wait ten sentences, but there’s no screams. The only sound is the ravaging fire. Captain says some “I got a bad feeling about this”.
* Suddenly the arc of fire spreads, into another arc, forming an open-centerd 8 with the soldiers in the center. The backlight from the new fire is bright, but the soldiers notice a shadow falling across them. They turn around. Behind them stands a huge, 8-foot tall elder witch with monstrous hands. Pretty built, idk, ryan will get that character design. She says something dark, scary.
* Decimates them. Hands through chests. Doesn’t even fight with a weapon. She’s one of the few witch elders (one or two per village), she fought in the war from long ago, she has no love of humans, and takes no pity. She is furious. One of the last soldiers she kills is a young man, barely 18, whose character we should be following throughout the chapter. He begs for mercy. She says “Take no pity, not even on the children.” (just repeat whateve captain said)
* Intercut with scenes of witches in the capital being brought to the king, usually murdered by their neighbours. Lots of innocent women murdered, it’s a good excuse to get rid of a pesky woman in your life. Non-murdered witches are killed by being burnt.

Chapter 4

* We go to the perspective of the little witch girl who watched her village being burnt. She had been away from it, collecting fungi that could only be found at dusk. But she had fun in the woods, lost track of time, past bedtime (her mother had instructed her to come back before sunset), so she’s hurrying back when she sees the fire and hears the screams
* She hides behind an outcropping of rocks and listens while her village is massacred
* She hides there until dawn. The soldiers pass her, they waited until the fire was out and then searched for survivors. They walked past her hiding spot, but she crouches into the grass and it grows over her and obscures her from view.
* She searches the village herself, but its still too hot, the smoke is making her cry again.
* The Queen sent out messenger witches to all the villages, to check for survivors manually, since the Queen can’t sense who survived. The witches the queen sends are quick and sneaky, not elders (they’re too important of an asset to risk now, they need to be preserved).
* The messenger to the girl’s village arrives while the girl is looking through the village. She had also hidden from the soldiers (her mission to rescue witches, not kill humans) as they walked by. She’s maybe 80 years old, not specialized, but ok at everything. She remembers the last war with the humans, she fought in it, it was only 30 years ago. She’s very disturbed by the deaths of her sisters, she’s surprised to find a survivor, especially one so young. She has orders to bring survivors back to the Hollow, and now that she’s seen the humans, she’s anxious to get back to safety. She has no love for them, and she’s upset with herself for not killing a few of them as they were leaving. Monsters. And now she had found this young witch, who had lost her entire village. The messenger is afraid, surrounded by this unholy death, and wants to save the girl.
* When the retriever gets to the village, sees that its burnt (probably smells it first), and starts checking it for survivors. Finds the girl in the remains of her old house, looking for the body of her mother. Not found. Bodies were scattered around the villages, they were shot by arrows as they ran around trying to find loved ones, and all of them were burnt. It would take days to identify them.
* Messenger approaches cautiously when she sees the girl, calls out. Tells her who she is, tells her that they have to go back to the forest where its safe (~1km away), in case those soldiers returned. Asks the girl questions about what’s happened, about how she survived, gets one word answers. Trying to get girl to trust her so they can leave. Messenger tells her that she lost her own mother in the war with humans. Tells her that she isn’t alone, there is still a big community of witches in the forest, where its safe.
* Suddenly there’s a volley of arrows – it’s the soldiers, the King ordered them to leave and then come back, to check for survivors more thoroughly. The messenger and the girl weren’t being very quiet, and the soldiers were being stealthy, so the soldiers fired arrows.
* One of the arrows hits the messenger in the arm. She yells in pain. But she had been shot before, during the war, and unlike the witches who lived in this village she isn’t taken completely by surprise. She’s ready for a fight.
* Grabs girl, and while soldiers are reloading, runs in the direction of the forest. She’s strong, she’s carrying the girl. She can run pretty fast, but the girl’s weight does slow her down. She gets a view of where the soldiers are hiding, and does her ‘summoning’ where she gets the grass to climb up the horses and spook them. Grabs a board, uses it as a shield against the arrows as they run, but she has to drop the girl. Girl has to run.
* The soldiers chase after them, on foot. It’s ~1km to the forest
* The soldiers start to catch up, one throws a knife which gets lodged in the board, and one soldier who carries a mace gets close enough to swing, and knocks the board right out of the witch’s hand
* Witch tells girl to keep running
* Most of the soldiers stop, but one keeps going after the girl
* Witch grabs knife/spear from the board and throws it after the soldier chasing the girl and kills him
* Girl hesitates, but the witch starts fighting the soldiers hand-to-hand and reminds her to run
* Witch tries to kill soldiers with the bows first, they’re still ~50m from the forest
* witch is disarmed, has managed to kill enough so that there’s only like 5 soldiers left. girl is almost to the forest, stops and turns, soldiers have a knife to the witch’s throat, tell girl to come back or else they’ll kill the witch, and the witch uses last bit of energy to push the girl forward and then kills herself
* The girl runs through the forest, soldiers in pursuit.
* Forest is like fangorn forest, and the witch’s are its caretakers. It’s dense, dark, and creepy. She leaves no footprints in it for them to follow, and the forest has animal-esque guardians. Humanoid, but more demonlike than anything else. Silent. The original guardians of the forest, might be explained that they now serve the queen? The girl is very familiar with the guardians. The guardians massacre the remaining soldiers, except for one who escapes in the confusion, who stumbles across the girl out of sheer luck.
* He’s young, and has been injured, is asking for mercy/help. All “I have a wife, please,”. Wants to know how to get out, just wants to leave. Girl should just roast him. She doesn’t speak to him at all.

Chapter 5

* Jump ahead to five years later. Girl was eleven when the massacre happened, now she’s 16. The witch’s are still in hiding, King knows there were survivors because two of his death squads never came back. He’s super paranoid, he’s in rough shape, deteriorating.
* The witch’s are tense, they want to go to war, but the tree/the queen is refusing to give out fruit. Letting all the fruit go to waste.
* Her life in the hollow isn’t necessarily structured, its like growing up on the farm. Elders will teach a useful lesson for a few hours every once in a while, when they apply. They learn a small lesson, and then they forage or hunt, help out around the hollow. They also have combat training. She likes combat training, likes fighting. It turns out that she’s a really powerful summoner. It’s not a campy school, its survival, she’s mostly just foraging. Combat training isn’t mandatory, though it is encouraged, and it isn’t structured. Its just an opportunity for her to practice her skills however she feels.
* She’s viewed as a strange by most of the other children. She’s quieter than most of the children, and she has a strange relationship with the Guardians. Like they’re friedns. They brought her to the hollow after she escaped the soldiers. The Guardians don’t speak, but they can communicate telepathically through touch, and they show images. The child doesn’t have a lot of other friends.
* At some point, explain how spells work, how powerful spells require more energy.
* At some point she could tend to a field of mushrooms or something that has become infected with a blight (forshadowing for the actual plague), and some witch can mutter about how humans are a blight on this earth
* Develop characters and emotions!
* She will leave the hollow one night, and the Guardians escort her to the edge of the forest. She summons a horse, rides to the capital, breaks into the castle, enters the king’s chambers, gives him weird dreams, steals his semen, and escapes into the night.
* She impregates herself with the king’s shtuff
* The Queen starts giving out fruit again, and gives a prophecy of how a half-human child will lead the witches into the future
* She dies in childbirth, and the idea is that she gave up all her energy to make her child super crazy powerful, more powerful of a summoner than she ever was

# Names

## Destroying the tree is an impractical idea to destroy the witches

The Queen is a badass, the scariest elder of all. If the other elders are 8ft, she’s like 12. Thosuands of years old. She started the witches.

Witch is captured by king. Questioned. Soldiers make secret deal with witch, behind the kings back, to take them to fruit in exachange for her life/freedom. She agrees, knowing that they’ll be eradicated. Gruesomely. The guardian doesn’t take pleasure in it, she takes her job extremely seriously. Kill them quickly. Like having a mouse in the house. Eliminate, move on. Deosn’t even see invaders as people. No pity, no sadism. As they enter, a fog settles. They can’t see eachother or hear eachother. Then one at a time, they die, and get pulled into the ground.

-these soldiers might be a plant, from the king, trying to see if the tree is vulnerable. He’ll know the location of the tree, though.

## Bringing home the bones

Withces go to burnt villages to collect the bones and bring them home, task takes a long time, and is dangerous. The king probably manages to capture a witch this way. Some sick soldier saves some of the witch bones and wears them into battle, which just sends some of the witch warriors into a rage (Screaming), and there’s super overkill.

## Conversation between Old King and Witch Queen

They meet outside the forest, outside the castle, neutral ground. The elders conjure up a surrogate of her, made of mud and sticks or something. King should still be intimidated by the meeting. Comes in full force. King brings the priest with him. Priest talks to the queen witch, calls her something derogatory. Queen’s voice is super loud but she isn’t shouting. “In a meeting between gods, who allows a priest to speak?” “There is but one God…” (King), queen says “I have lived for thousands of years. I defy your god.”

# SUPPLEMENTARY INFO

## Witches

* breed of human, still kind of human. They can still have lustful feelings for humans. ~~, evolved to guard nature against destruction~~
* ~~Metaphor with native peoples~~
* All female. As a society, based in sisterhood. Strong respect for elders, elders form basis of government. Populatino spread out about several village around the kingdom. Some slight cultural differences between villages, but they’re still one nation (ex. Culture of different provinces within Canada).
* They are able to mate with humans (reproduce sexually), and this produces half-witches, male or female. Halflings. Likely female, but can be male.
* Full witches are created/born from the fruit of a sacred tree. Tree produces as many fruits as needed, based on the current witch population (they are meant to guard nature after all, so nature can decide how many of them it needs). The tree was created by the original witch, the queen witch, who guards the tree, controls the tree, picks its fruit and distributes it.
* Witches who will give birth eat the fruit, and somehow this impregnates them (no inserting-fruit-up-the-vagine scenes please). Offspring is always female.
* The Queen is the Guardian of the tree and of the hollow and forest, she can sense when humans or witches enter the forest, but she guards the hollow specifically. She doesn’t leave the tree cave (too risky). She is only consulted out of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, the elders handle everything else democratically. She’s a boss.
* Rapidly mature (magic powers first come around 4 or 5, and that’s also when witch puberty hits). A 10-year-old witch could look like an 18-year-old human. When they reach about 200, they go through witch menopause (no longer able to bear children, but they morf into something less human, hit another growth spurt). They go from being average human size (5’ – 6’) to towering (7’-9’). How they grow varies by individual (long legs short torso, long torso). Maybe have some lements of nature growing on them?
* Witch sacred land is this big, dark, overgrown forest. The Hovel is hidden inside. This is where the witches originally lived, but now with the treaty, they have villages outside. But in the event of an emergency, they would all retreat to the forest.
* The tree is extremely sacred, obviously, and grows undergrowd in the capital (the witch capital is a network of tunnels below ground, secret location, no human has ever entered). Catacombs? Hovel?
* Folk tale that if a human eats the fruit, they’ll gain witchy powers, but its total garbage, and not true. Doesn’t stop some people from trying to find it. Probably the fruit would just kill them.
* Humans also use witches as scary stories for children to make them behave
* Lots of types of witches. Typically, they specialize in a particular area/field/subject. Specialty.
  + - Note most witches can do little spells in all these areas, like heat a cup of something etc. Most witches can do almost all of these (ex. Any with could help heal, but they won’t be as good a specialized healer). Specialized witches are ones that are drawn to one particular area of magic, maybe they were born from a strong line of healers etc, and they’re super good at it.
  + Summoners = summon creatures. Monsters. Beasts. Demons. The more powerful the summoner, the larger/scarier/wilder the beast they can control. Maybe they’re built from organic material (using alchemy to create living thing). When its time is done/its killed, it dissolves back into dirt/sticks, whatever form the molecules were originally in. Inherently loyal beasts. Since the war, they just help with agriculture and help plants grow. Really sensitive.
  + Healers = duh. Also they’re midwives.
  + Elementals = control the elements. Earth, air, fire, water.
  + Warriors/hunters/workers = Strong, driven, fit. Versatile. Provider for villages. Most common. They build the houses. Worker bee. But in a fight, picture witch with five badass spears floating around her, and she just controls them and people just friggen dieeeee. (other idea: witch fights normal, but has two cannon balls / rocks? that float around almost sentient and take people out. Like semi-sentient bludgers). After the big war, they’ve kind of settled down in their villages. Mostly farmers/hunters/builders now. One warrior might have unreal strength, wield mace with the heavy end the size of like a car.
  + Queen: The Queen. An absolute beast. Main job is to protect the tree. Someone comes within 5 km, snaps awake, ready to kill them. Controls warding. Doesn’t leave the hollow. Think of portal keeper in thor, but who is also the queen. She is a seer. The original witch, her life force is tied to the continuing existence of the witch population. She decides when more witches need to be created. This is why she is still alive after thousands of years.
* Witches can live up to 300ish years, they can heal themselves. Death is always peaceful unless there’s war. Witches are extremely health. Not effected by human diseases. They die the turtle in Kung Fu Panda. When its their time to die, they want to die under the tree, sort of how dogs like to go to the woods. Some sort of peaceful way to dissolve or something or get absorbed by the tree, nothing gruesome. A witch dying in war, away from the tree, is a horror for other witches to behold. Drives their hated for humans. Gathering the body means a lot to them, but during the war, this couldn’t happen. Coming home with every witch means almost as much as the objective.
* Witches draw power from each other. Part of their mental health is to be around other witches/within the proximity of the tree. If a witch is away from the colony, from other witches, she’s weaker than the other witches, she sleeps less well, has a human lifespan. Witchy, but human, susceptible to human diseases. Plagues could kill exiled witched.
  + Self-imposed exile by sleeping with humans. Not total exile where they’re spat upon, they can come back to the hollow on special occasions. Some consqenses (less strong, more susceptible to human disease, separated from community etc). Self-imposed exiled.
  + True Exile is reserved for traitors of war who reveal the location of the tree/the hollow are exiled harshly, completely cut off. Who is exiled is decided by the elders. Their memories of where the hollow is are taken away, they can never find it again (if they do they’ll be treated as invaders and insta-killed). They slowly go crazy, twitchy, like how we see homeless drug addicts. Eat raw meat. Die early. Mental deterioration. Worse than death.
  + The king’s healer is in self-imposed exile, but can come back whenever she wants, she’s more of an emissary.
* Guardians of the forest, the original guardians of the forest. They protect it. They don’t work for the queen, but them helping with its protection is very useful to her. They’re familiar with witches. Silent, humanoid, demon-like. They didn’t get involved in the war until the humans burnt part of the forest, and this helped turn the tide in the favour of the witches and helped get a treaty started.

## Treaty

The witches started the war. They’ve traditionally kept to the forest for as long as they’ve been around, the forest is older than the witches. Humans in this particular kingdom are super religious, think witches commune with the devil. View the tree as the tree in the garden of eden, view the queen as the serpent. So if they see witches leave the forest, they kill them. Burn them, drown them, hang them. The witches want to leave the forest, but they cant. They’re confined to it by the hatred and brutality of humans. Queen forsees, unspecifically, a time when more witches will be needed. She doesn’t tell anyone about this, but she starts creating more and more witches. Then a child witch wanders out from the forest, a child without magical abilities yet, and she is murdered. Catalyst for witches going out and attacking. First move: knock down the wall around the kings lands.

Note: the king is more of an emperor, this whole thing takes place in more of an Asian setting, not England. So knocking down that wall is like knocking down the great wall of china.

Slaughtering human villages, children, women, etc. Lots of witches had problems with that, wanted to save the innocents (children and babies), but they can’t spare any resources (humans have the advantages of numbers).

Theres big battles, King sets fire to the forest, over half of it burns, but not the area over the hollow. Tunnels outside the safe-zone are collapsed by the queen. She doens’ thave the power to put out a fire that big, though eventually with the help of some rain, she and the other witches are able to.

King’s oldest son dies in the war. Youngest son and pregnant wife are kept safe in the castle, but the witches cast a spell that makes the wife really sick.

Kings army pushes them back to the forest to some extend. They go from ransacking the kingdom to fighting between the kingdom and the forest. The lack of forest area, and the impending death of the king’s wife, now forces the queen and the king to meet and go over the treaty.

Treaty lets the witches set up vilages outside the forest, but not too much. Designated territory around the forest. Withces agree to heal the king’s wife, though her unborn child is lost and she is infertile. The witch that goes to heal the king’s wife stays there, because she sees the good she can do there, in a position close to the royal family. Keeps them healthy, is al iving reminder of the good that can come of a relationship between humans and witches. Serves as an ambassador. She has the King’s protection while in the castle. Sworn off non-healing magic. After war, after healing the queen, heals soldiers coming back from the war. Eventually is just accepted as a member of the staff, though people (and the king’s last remaining son) are suspicious of her. She grows to respect the king, because he stands up for her when people talk crap about her.

### Trade

Witches might want steel, metal, technology, etc. Humans might want medicinal stuff, spices and mushrooms only found in the forest. This allows for some civility and intermingling, witches may fall in love with umans passing through the villages, etc (no humans allowed in forest, but king doesn’t care if self-exiled witches live in the capital). Witches could hide their distinguishing features, to blend better.

## Origin of the Queen

Originally human. As a child, wandered into the forest, somehow the guardians of the forest became the guardians of her AND the forest, and she became the big guardian of the forest. Learned magic, started a race, is cool.

## Religion

We’ll be non-specific about this. Not a Christian religion, but they have a god, they pray to before meals etc. Monotheistic. More of a zoroastian thing, with a dark spirit and a light spirit, neither is necessarily good or evil. But the witches are evil. People fear them, they’re unknown, their power is weird.

## Trade

Witches probably want some metal, exotic oils, idk. Humans want certain plants, exotic foods from the forests, dried herbs/medicinal plants, stuff like that. This is the main interaction between humans and witches. Some witches fall in love with human traders. They’re called “traders and traitors” by other witches. Humans aren’t allowed to live in witch settlements.